

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /031 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/EGY:GNANDERSON:PM

APPROVED BY NEA:RPDAVIES

NEA/EGY:MSTERNER

S/S- MR. LUERS

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

INFO USINT CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 039332

EXDIS, TOSEC 153

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BEXP, PFOR

SUBJECT: MINE CLEARANCE IN SUEZ CANAL

FOR SISCO FROM DAVIES

1. ADM. PEET CONVEYED FOLLOWING MEMORANDUM TO ME ON FEB.
27 IN RESPONSE TO YOUR INQUIRY:

2. BEGIN TEXT: MEMORANDUM FOR MR. RODGER P. DAVIES, DEPT.
OF STATE. SUBJECT: US ASSISTANCE IN CLEARING EXPLOSIVE
ORDNANCE FROM THE SUEZ CANAL.

3. MR. SISCO REQUESTED THAT DOD PROVIDE INFORMATION AND
RECOMMENDATIONS NECESSARY TO ENABLE SECRETARY KISSINGER
DURING HIS CURRENT TRIP TO RESPOND AFFIRMATIVELY TO THE
EGYPTIAN REQUEST THAT THE USG ASSIST THE GOE IN CLEARING
MINES AND UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE (UXO) FROM THE SUEZ CANAL
AND ITS BANKS.

4. THE GOE HAS STRESSED THAT IT HOPES TO RECEIVE THIS
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ASSISTANCE ON A NON-REIMBURSABLE BASIS, ALLUDING TO US
QUOTE RESPONSIBILITY UNQUOTE FOR PROVIDING TO ISRAEL THE
MINES AND OTHER ORDNANCE NOW DEPOSITED IN OR ALONG THE
CANAL . AS AMBASSADOR EILTS CORRECTLY DID WHEN THIS ARGU-

MENT WAS PUT TO HIM, THE USG SHOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE CLEAR ITS REJECTION OF THIS CONCEPT OF US QUOTE RESPONSIBILITY

UNQUOTE AS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE.

5. AS FOR THE UNDERTAKING OF THE UXO CLEARANCE PROJECT ITSELF, THE BEST ESTIMATE THAT DOD COULD PROVIDE AT THIS TIME WITH RESPECT TO THE TIME, PERSONNEL AND MATERIEL ASSETS REQUIRED WOULD BE UNREALISTIC AND PERHAPS MISLEADING. UNTIL THE SCOPE AND COMPLEXITY OF THE CLEARING OPERATION CAN BE MORE CLEARLY DEFINED, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO DEVELOP THE FUNDING AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS TO SUPPORT A PLAN FOR COMPLETE ORDNANCE CLEARANCE OF THE CANAL. THE SURVEY TEAM CURRENTLY IN-COUNTRY WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE IN WASHINGTON UNTIL 4 MARCH, AND IT WILL BE NECESSARY FOR THE JOINT STAFF AND THE SERVICES TO REVIEW THEIR FINDINGS BEFORE A REASONABLE APPRECIATION OF THE MAGNITUDE OF THE OPERATION AND THE EFFORT REQUIRED TO ACCOMPLISH IT CAN BE ASCERTAINED. UNTIL WE HAVE THIS APPRECIATION, ANY COMMITMENT TO COMPLETE THE ENTIRE JOB UNILATERALLY MAY BE UNWISELY PREMATURE. WE ARE ALSO AWAITING INFORMATION FROM THE ISRAELIS WHICH WILL BEAR IMPORTANTLY ON THE SCOPE OF THE EFFORT REQUIRED.

6. IT ALSO APPEARS THAT THE LEGAL AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED, WHILE PROBABLY SURMOUNTABLE, ARE QUITE CONSIDERABLE. THE VIEWS OF DOD GENERAL COUNSEL ON THIS ASPECT OF THE QUESTION ARE AT ATTACHMENT 1. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE APPROPRIATE SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR THIS PROJECT WOULD BE AID, EITHER DIRECTLY OR, PERHAPS MOST APPROPRIATELY, THROUGH THE UN. THIS WOULD REQUIRE THE PROJECT BEING TAKEN ON BY THE UN AS A UN-BUDGETED ACTIVITY.

7. THE QUESTION OF A UN OR MULTILATERAL APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM HAS ALSO BEEN RAISED BY BRITISH ACTIVITIES TO DATE. THE UK GOVERNMENT WAS ALSO A RECIPIENT OF THE GOE CONFIDENTIAL

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REQUEST FOR HELP. IT HAS INDICATED A READINESS TO BE OF ASSISTANCE AND IS REPORTEDLY PREPARED TO SEND A SURVEY TEAM OF ITS OWN TO EGYPT. THE UK NAVAL ATTACHE IN CAIRO HAS ALSO SPOKEN TO OUR SURVEY TEAM CHIEF, BUT WE DO NOT KNOW ON WHAT AUTHORITY, OF SPECIFIC OPERATIONAL ASSETS THE UK MIGHT PROVIDE. WE NEED TO KNOW WITH CERTAINTY WHAT THE UK IS PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE AND THROUGH WHAT MODALITIES IT WISHES TO PURSUE THE MATTER (BILATERALLY, UNDER UN AUSPICES, ETC.). IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT, WHILE THE ROYAL NAVY CERTAINLY HAS THE REQUISITE TECHNICAL COMPETENCE AND CAPABILITY IN MINE CLEARANCE TO BE OF ASSISTANCE, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE UK CAN BE HELPFUL WITH FUNDING.

8. CURSORY RESEARCH INDICATES THAT THE CLEARANCE OF THE CANAL IN 1956-57, WHICH INVOLVED MAINLY SALVAGE AND DREDGING OPERATIONS AND LITTLE OR NO UXO CLEARANCE, WAS CARRIED OUT UNDER UN AUSPICES AND WAS FUNDED BY LOANS PROVIDED BY VARIOUS COUNTRIES. THE US CONTRIBUTION OF 5 MILLION DOLLARS WAS MADE UNDER THE MUTUAL ASSISTANCE ACT. CONTRIBUTIONS WERE REPAID THROUGH A SURCHARGE OF 3 PERCENT ON CANAL TOLLS. THE FOREGOING IS MENTIONED TO ILLUSTRATE THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF WAYS TO APPROACH FUNDING OF THIS OPERATION. UNTIL WE HAVE A FIRM GRASP OF WHAT THE JOB ENTAILS, IT APPEARS TO DOD THAT WE SHOULD KEEP THE FUNDING OPTIONS OPEN.

9. FINALLY, WE SHOULD ALSO REMEMBER THAT UXO CLEARANCE IS MANIFESTLY NOT WITHOUT ITS HAZARDS AND WE MUST BE PREPARED, IF WE UNDERTAKE SUCH OPERATIONS, EVEN IN AN ADVISORY ROLE, TO ACCEPT THE FACT THAT US CASUALTIES MAY BE INCURRED.

10. IN SUMMARY, DOD FEELS THAT OUR RESPONSE AT THIS TIME TO THE GOE SHOULD BE GENERALLY AFFIRMATIVE ONLY, REFLECTING OUR INTENTION TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ADVICE AND EQUIPMENT PLUS SUCH UNIQUE OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES AS WE MAY POSSESS, BUT HOLDING OPEN OUR OPTIONS AS TO FUNDING AND THE PORTION OF THE TOTAL JOB WE MAY BE WILLING OR ABLE TO UNDERTAKE. SIGNED RAY PEET. END TEXT.

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